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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

FOR THE

YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31st, 1925.

P. H. SEAL, M.B., B.S., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.,

Medical Officer of Health.



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SOUTH MOLTON,

April 1926.

To the South Molton Town Council.

Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit my Report for the year 1925.

This Report according to instructions from the Ministry of Health is a Survey Report dealing generally with the progress made, during the preceding five years, in the improvement of the public health and the extent and character of the change made in the service of the area (*e.g.*, Housing, Water Supply, Sewerage, Scavenging, Food Inspection, etc.).

During the preceding year the General Health of the Borough was very good, and there was no epidemic of notifiable diseases. There were a few cases of chickenpox and of epidemic parotitis.

Natural and Social Conditions.

Area ...	...	...	...	...	...	5,709 acres
Population (Census 1921)	...	...	...	...	...	2,804
(Estimated 1925)	...	...	...	...	...	2,780

Physical Features and General Character of the Area.

The area consists of the Town of South Molton situated near the border of Exmoor, about 450 feet above sea level, together with a rural area of undulating agricultural land extending to a radius of about three miles south and west. Within this area, on the outskirts, are three small hamlets.

Number of inhabited houses (1921)	...	...	915
Rateable Value	...	...	£15,348
Sum represented by a penny rate	...	...	£25

The social conditions, etc., are partly agricultural and partly business and industrial, the latter consisting chiefly of a collar factory and laundry and building trades.

Vital Statistics.

<i>Births—</i>	M	F
Legitimate	26	21
Illegitimate	—	3
Birth Rate 17·98.	Average rate for England and Wales 18·3.	

<i>Deaths—</i>	M	F
	17	22
Death Rate 14·02.	Average rate for England and Wales 12·2.	

Deaths of Infants under 1 year of age—

Legitimate	...	2
Illegitimate	...	Nil

General Causes of Death.

Whooping Cough	...	...	...	...	1
Influenza	...	...	...	...	1
Respiratory Tuberculosis	...	...	...	...	1
Cancer	...	...	...	...	2
Cerebral Hæmorrhage, etc.	...	...	...	...	7
Heart Disease	...	...	...	...	10
Arterio Sclerosis	...	...	...	...	2
Appendicitis	...	...	...	...	1
Nephritis	...	...	...	...	1
Deaths from Violence	...	...	...	...	3
Other defined Diseases	...	...	...	...	8

General Provision of Health Services in the Area.

Hospitals available for the Area—

Tuberculosis—Hawley, Barnstaple (County Council)
Hawkmoor (County Council).

Maternity—Nil.

Children—North Devon Infirmary, Barnstaple.

Fever—Nil.

Smallpox—Provision made by the County Council for North Devon.

Others—North Devon Infirmary.

Institutional Provision for Unmarried Mothers, Illegitimate Infants and Homeless Children in the Area—

The South Molton Poor Law Institution and Children's Home.

Ambulance Facilities—

(A) For infectious cases—Nil.

(B) For non-infectious and accident cases—Police hand-ambulance.

Clinics and Treatment Centres available—

Tuberculosis Dispensary—9, Castle Street, Barnstaple (County Council).

Venereal Clinic—Barnstaple (County Council).

Public Health Officers of the Local Authority—

Mr. G. K. Foster, Certificate Royal Sanitary Institute, Sanitary Inspector, also Borough Surveyor (Whole-time Officer).

Professional Nursing in the Homes—This is provided for by the local District Nursing Association.

Number of Midwives practising in the Area—1.

Chemical Work—Nil.

Legislation in Force—Public Health Acts (Amendment) Act, 1890, sections i. and iii. adopted March 24th, 1906, Bye-laws for new buildings, animal keeping, house refuse, lodging houses, slaughter houses, etc., 1868.

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area.

Water.—There is now a constant and abundant supply of water of good quality, from the Council's Waterworks situated on the edge of Exmoor, and not liable to contamination.

During 1925 the main was efficiently scraped and overhauled and the filters cleaned, which has ensured a constant supply. The greater proportion of the population is supplied from the works, but the outlying parts of the area are supplied by wells.

In one district the wells were defective, allowing contamination by surface-water. This has now been remedied.

Rivers and Streams.—These are free from pollution.

Drainage and Sewerage.—The Drainage system is generally efficient, the sewerage being efficiently dealt with on the Council's Sewage Farm. The Sewerage Works are regularly attended to.

Closet Accommodation.—Generally, Water-closets, except in the rural parts of the area where there are about 50 earth closets—40 houses are without separate closets, 60 houses are without flushing cisterns. The Council has commenced a house-to-house inspection with a view to providing sufficient water-closet accommodation for each house.

Scavenging.—The streets are scavenged daily. The dry refuse is collected three times weekly, and carted away to the depot, which is some distance from the town and any dwellings. An incinerator should be provided, and is being considered by the Council.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

Number of Inspections—

Bakehouses.—Number of visits 26.

Number found defective 1.

Dairies, Milkshops and Cowsheds.—Number of visits 25.

None were found defective.

Slaughterhouses.—Number of visits to 26. None were found defective.

Railway Station.—Number of visits 12. Conditions are satisfactory.

Schools.—Number of inspections 4. Sanitary conditions are good and water supply adequate.

Number of houses inspected 68.

Number of houses repaired 8.

Number of informal notices served 10.

Number of statutory notices served 7.

Notices were all complied with.

Premises and Occupations which can be controlled by Bye-laws or Regulations—

Slaughterhouses—Number 5.

Bakehouses—Number 6.

Dairies and Milkshops—Number 10.

Housing.

Statistics for the year 1925—

Number of New Houses erected during the year	Nil
1. Unfit Dwelling Houses Inspection—	
(1) Total number inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts)...	85
(2) Number inspected and recorded under the Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations 1910, or the Housing Consolidated Regulations 1925	65
(3) Number found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	2
(4) Number found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation ...	32

2. Remedy of Defects without service of formal notices—

Number of defective Dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers	...	15
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3. Action under Statutory Powers—

A Proceedings under Section 3 of the Housing Act, 1925—

(1) Number of Dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs	8
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(2) Number rendered fit after service of formal notices—

(a) By owners...	6
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(b) By Local Authority in default of owners	Nil
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B Proceedings under Public Health Acts—

(1) Number of Dwelling-houses in respect of which Notices were served requiring defects to be remedied	...	12
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(2) Number in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices—

(a) By owners...	8
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(b) By Local Authority in default of owners	Nil
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c Proceedings under Sections 11, 14 and 15 of the Housing Act, 1925...	Nil
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General Housing Conditions in the Area—

(1) There is a distinct shortage of houses, about 30 being required to make up the deficiency and to replace some that are not in all respects fit for habitation, and cannot be made so. To meet the shortage the Council have erected ten houses, and are considering the erection of six more. They are also offering for sale plots of land for the erection of houses by private enterprise.

(II) Overcrowding—

Cases of actual overcrowding are very few. One Common Lodging House was refused registration from this cause.

(III) Fitness of Houses—

(1) (a) The general standard of housing in the area is fair.

(b) The general character of defects found is insufficient closet accommodation, drainage of court yards, defective floors, etc.

(2) General Action taken as regards Unfit Houses under—

(a) The Public Health Acts: Informal action was taken by the Local Authority in some cases, and also formal notices served in other cases, and many of the defects have been remedied.

(b) The Housing Acts: Several formal notices have been served and generally complied with.

(3) Difficulties found in remedying Unfitness—

The chief difficulty is the low rentals of many of the houses.

(4) Conditions affecting Housing as regards Water Supply, Closet Accommodation and Refuse Disposal—

The Water Supply since the Main has been scraped is abundant and constant. The Closet accommodation is defective, and a house-to-house inspection is in progress with view to remedying defects. Refuse disposal is satisfactory.

(IV) Unhealthy Areas—None.

Inspection and Supervision of Food.

Milk.—The Milk Supply is adequate and wholesome. Dairies and Milkshops are regularly inspected, and are generally in good condition.

Meat.—Meat inspection is carried on from time to time, and also during slaughtering.

Private Slaughterhouses.—

Number in 1920. In January, 1925. In December, 1925.

Registered	5	5	5
Licensed	—	—	—
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	5	5	5
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

They have been regularly inspected, and found generally in good condition.

Bakehouses are regularly inspected, and are regularly lime-washed and kept clean.

Prevalence of, and Control over, Infectious Diseases.

Since the end of 1922 the area has been singularly free from notifiable epidemic diseases, only two cases of Scarlet Fever and two of Diphtheria being notified.

In the spring and summer of 1922 there was rather a severe outbreak of Scarlet Fever, thirty-two cases being notified. The source of the outbreak could not be traced. Isolation was carried out as far as was practical, but this was difficult in many of the cottages. The need of an Isolation Hospital was greatly felt. Contacts were excluded from school, and the schools were closed three weeks before the summer holidays. Thorough disinfection of the infected houses was carried out.

There were six cases of Scarlet Fever in 1921.

Diphtheria has not been very prevalent during the period under review, eight cases only being notified, six of them occurring in 1921. Antitoxin is supplied by the Local Authority, and is promptly made use of when required.

Pathological and bacteriological specimens are sent to the County Laboratory at Exeter for examination when required.

No use has been made of the Schick and Dick tests in diphtheria and scarlet fever, nor of the recently developed artificial methods of immunization against these diseases.

One case of Encephalitis lethargica was notified in 1921; also one case of Arterio poliomyelitis.

With regard to non-notifiable acute infectious diseases, there was an epidemic of Measles in 1924. It was not of a very virulent nature, and the mortality was nil, though a considerable number of children were affected. The Schools were closed for three weeks.

Influenza has occurred in every spring, though there has been no serious epidemic. The mortality from this disease has been very low, only two cases being certified from this cause.

Several cases of Epidemic parotitis and of Chickenpox occurred in 1923 and 1924.

Notifiable Diseases during the year 1925.

Disease.	Total Cases Notified.	Total Deaths.
Smallpox - - - - -	Nil	-
Scarlet Fever - - - - -	Nil	-
Diphtheria - - - - -	Nil	-
Enteric Fever - - - - -	Nil	-
Pneumonia - - - - -	3	Nil
Other Diseases - - - - -	Nil	-

Tuberculosis.

New Cases and Mortality during 1925—

Age-Periods.	New Cases.				Deaths.			
	Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.		Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0 - - -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 - - -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5 - - -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10 - - -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15 - - -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20 - - -	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
25 - - -	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
35 - - -	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
45 - - -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
55 - - -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
65 and upwards	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals -	-	3	-	-	-	1	-	-

A new Sanitary Inspector was appointed in 1925. I have much pleasure in acknowledging the help he has given me.

I beg to remain,

Your obedient Servant,

P. H. SEAL,
M.B., B.S., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., M.O.H.

